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IP address

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An identifier for a computer or device on a TCP/IP network. Networks using the TCP/IP protocol route messages based on the IP address of the destination. The format of an IP address is a 32-bit numeric address written as four numbers separated by periods. Each number can be zero to 255. For example, 1.160.10.240 could be an IP address.

Within an isolated network, you can assign IP addresses at random as long as each one is unique. However, connecting a private network to the Internet requires using registered IP addresses (called Internet addresses) to avoid duplicates.

The four numbers in an IP address are used in different ways to identify a particular network and a host on that network. Three regional Internet registries -- ARIN, RIPE NCC and APNIC -- assign Internet addresses from the following three classes.

- Class A - supports 16 million hosts on each of 126 networks
- Class B - supports 65,000 hosts on each of 16,000 networks
- Class C - supports 254 hosts on each of 2 million networks



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